

**UTAH DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING
April 7, 2008**

Members Present: Craig Burr, Conducting; Colleen Gabbitas, Sandi Errigo, Lilas Park, Russell Durler, Barbara Durler, Marianne Johnstone, Ann Stevenson, Nona Dowdle, Thayle Byington, DeRae Preston, Amanda Thompson, Lori Porter, Roy Droddy

Welcome & Introductions: Craig Burr

Minutes of Last Meeting: Approved

Agenda Items:

Women's Summit-

The Women's Summit group has been in place for over four years, with 25 partner agencies participating along the Wasatch front. These agencies provide wrap-around services for women prior to parole, for such things as housing, medical needs, employment contacts, custody/visitation issues, etc. Offenders sign up for help with services in much the same manner as Workforce Services. This program has been offered to the female offender population first to test it out on a smaller group. Thus far, two planning meetings have been held to consider opening the program to the male offender population. Some of the groups participating are DOC, Workforce Services, State Homeless Services, Faith-Based Initiatives, Housing Authority, and Juvenile Justice. The problem of recidivism needs a fresh approach, not just the perspective of the Department of Corrections and individual families. Valuable input and ideas can come from these other agencies, making it more of a statewide effort.

Several of those present raised concerns about housing for inmates when they are paroled, terminated, or expired. Craig acknowledged that this was a critical problem. He informed the group that there was a volunteer from the Fremont Center who had partnered with an associate in developing duplexes to accommodate newly released offenders. The project is still in the early stages but provides some hope for the future.

The next meeting on the Men's Summit development will be held April 17, 2008 at 10:a.m. in room 109 in the Department of Corrections Administration Building. Interested parties may attend but must first notify Craig Burr so that Security can be informed.

Legislative Update-

Craig Burr reported on items passed recently by the Utah State Legislature. The Executive Directors have been working hard with the Governor. Not all of our issues were addressed and granted funding. Results of legislative action include the following:

1. Approval of a new salary ladder for sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. Salaries will increase at the 3rd, 6th, and 9th years of service. Three million dollars has been granted for this program. Hopefully, this will help attract new people to a career in Corrections, replenishing the number of officers, which is currently 120 short.
2. Three to seven million dollars has been granted for 71-72 new staff at the Gunnison maximum-security facility. Maximum-security population is not growing at the present time, so general population offenders will fill remaining available beds.
3. Funds in the amount of 7.6 million dollars were obtained for private parole violators centers. These centers will ease the burden of expanding prison population by providing supervision for inmates who have technical violations only and not new crimes.
4. All state employees were given a 5% COLA raise.
5. Bill 109 proposed implementation of a new sex offender risk assessment tool for sex offenders on or off the registry. Proponents of this bill wanted to use sex offenders throughout the State as their test group. We presented opposition in view of the fact that this is not a proven assessment tool and until there is some proof of the program's benefit, we do not want to be the test group. There may only be one company bidding to do the testing, at \$200 per test. With no competing bids, that figure is too high.
6. House Bill 86, presented by Jack Drexler, requested 1.5 million dollars for higher education in order to keep providers involved in the prison's program. These providers are not currently even meeting expenses. The bill did not pass, but through continued efforts by Jack, we did get \$150,000 which represents only 10% of the original amount asked for.
7. We did not receive additional funding for sex offender treatment. There has been no increase in funding since 1996 and the sex offender population has been steadily increasing.

We have met with the Department of Workforce Services (John Pierpont) and devised a new model for assisting offenders re-entering the community. The program, HERD (Homeless, Ex-offenders, Refugees, Disabled) will have a job developer for each group represented. The job developer functions as a connection between community employers

and those needing job placement. Funds are being sought from the participating companies and DOC to pay for this additional staffing at Workforce Services.

Comments From the Group:

Ann Larsen expressed concern about the need for greater consistency and cooperation among caseworkers, AP&P, directors, etc. Information regarding conditions of parole, housing, etc. given to paroling offenders changes depending on the source.

The attitude of prison officers and agents was discussed. Craig said the prison will be paying for motivational instruction for officers this fiscal year and next. It will take time to change the culture of corrections, but this need is being addressed.

The STRIVE program is going well. (STRIVE: Success Through Responsibility Integrity Values Effort) Steps of achievement are being worked out for offenders. Two housing sections at Gunnison are currently using the pilot program.

Property will now store important documents for inmates such as driver's license, birth certificate, and social security cards.

A question was raised about the possibility of treatment centers rather than incarceration for substance abuse offenders. This is being tried in the state of Hawaii. Housing is a more critical issue than employment. Drug courts are proving to be very effective, as is the DORA program.

Suggestions for Next Meeting:

- Representative from AP&P (Brent Butcher/Geri Miller)
- ID Cards

Next Meeting:

The next FOCUS meeting will be held Monday, June 2, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Region III Adult Probation & Parole office, 36 West Fremont Ave. (1100 South), Salt Lake City, Utah.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.